

## Lesson 5 Figures of Speech

Writers use **figures of speech** to create imaginative descriptions.

- A **simile** is a figure of speech that makes a comparison between two things using the words *like* or *as*.  
The sunbaked mountains slump down to the sea like tired old dinosaurs.
- A **metaphor** is a figure of speech that makes a comparison by stating that one thing *is* another.  
The houses of the fishing village are whitewashed shoeboxes, scattered along the road.
- **Personification** gives human traits or abilities to an animal or object.  
By January, the village had crawled beneath its quilt of snow and fallen fast asleep.
- **Hyperbole** creates a striking image by exaggerating something.  
The bronco bucked so hard that I was in the air all afternoon.



### Tips for Success

- Figures of speech point out unexpected connections.
- Remember that a figure of speech is not literally true. It helps you see things in a new way.

Read this poem, paying attention to the figures of speech.

#### The Eagle

He clasps the crag with crooked hands;  
Close to the sun in lonely lands,  
Ring'd with the azure world, he stands.  
The wrinkled sea beneath him crawls;  
He watches from his mountain walls,  
And like a thunderbolt he falls.

—Alfred, Lord Tennyson

1. In the last line of the poem, what figure of speech does the poet use?
  - A. personification
  - B. metaphor
  - C. simile
  - D. hyberbole

1. ☐ A ☐ B ☐ C ☐ D



Mark your answer choice by filling in the oval.

Now check to see whether you chose the correct answer.

- A. The poet does not give the eagle any human traits in the last line.
- B. The poet does not say the bird is a thunderbolt.
- C. This is the correct answer. The poet uses the word *like* to compare the eagle to a thunderbolt. This is a simile.
- D. The poet is not really using wild exaggeration here.



**Test Practice**

As you read these passages, look for figures of speech.

They are the only ones who understand me. I am the only one who understands them. Four skinny trees with skinny necks and pointy elbows like mine. Four who do not belong here but are here . . . .

Their strength is secret. They send ferocious roots beneath the ground. They grow up and they grow down and grab the earth between their hairy toes and bite the sky with violent teeth and never quit their anger. This is how they keep.

—Sandra Cisneros,  
“Four Skinny Trees”

There is a smell of burning in small towns in afternoon, and men with buckles on their arms are raking leaves in yards as boys come by with straps slung back across their shoulders. The oak leaves, big and brown, are bedded deep in yard and gutter: they make deep wadings to the knee for children in the streets. The fire will snap and crackle like a whip, sharp acrid smoke will sting the eyes, in mown fields the little vipers of the flame eat past the black coarse edges of burned stubble like a line of locusts.

—Thomas Wolfe,  
*Of Time and the River*

1. (A) (B) (C) (D)
2. (A) (B) (C) (D)
3. (A) (B) (C) (D)
4. (A) (B) (C) (D)

Mark the best answer for questions 1–4.

1. What type of figure of speech does Sandra Cisneros use?

- A. similes
- B. metaphors
- C. personification
- D. hyperbole

2. To what does Cisneros compare the trees' roots?

- A. fingers
- B. earth
- C. teeth
- D. toes

3. When he describes the crackle of the fire as the sound of a whip, Thomas Wolfe uses

- A. a simile.
- B. a metaphor.
- C. personification.
- D. hyperbole.

4. In describing the flame as vipers, Thomas Wolfe uses

- A. a metaphor.
- B. a simile.
- C. personification.
- D. hyperbole.

5. Identify two specific instances of figures of speech in Sandra Cisneros's description of the trees. Explain how you know they are figures of speech.

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